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Your ref: 6/2018/2768/OUTLINE
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Re: Hatfield Business Park

Dear Planning,

Thank you for sight of this application on which I comment from a crime prevention perspective.

I have read with great interest the outline proposals for this application and I would like to make the following observations and comments.

I have any serious concerns with the intention to develop a large scale residential development in this area, especially if the intention is to mirror or form an extension to the existing housing in the relatively newly constructed 'Airfield' area.

The housing previously built on the 'Old Airfield' immediately adjacent to the intended building has been in occupation for some time now and has afforded me the opportunity to conduct some crime pattern analysis using the 'police.uk' website. This area can be used as a 'rough' guide as to what is likely to be built in the new development. If the development is to go ahead, I will commission a more detailed analysis by our in force analysts at the appropriate time.

Initial findings are that the area suffers relatively high incidences of crime in general and numerically speaking the highest levels are recorded for anti-social behaviour and crimes of a violent or sexual nature. This is of great concern to me and also the local police teams who have to deal with the inflated levels on a daily basis. Based on these finding I believe enhanced crime prevention interventions are called for.

When the original housing was marketed, the vast majority of purchasers were 'buy to let' and the properties were rented out in large numbers to students. This occupancy has changed in recent years with the building of new student facilities etc. but owner occupation levels are still low and crime levels are still high. Last year's figures do show improvements, but this has been at the cost of very high levels of policing and it is unlikely that the local station could absorb 1,100 new homes without a significant increase in police activity. I am able to produce these crime figures and discuss them in detail with anyone who wishes to do so.

It should be noted that the present housing was not built to any security standard and also pre-dates Building Regulation 'Q' and this, I believe is reflected in the crime figures!

I would hope that there is an appetite to ensure that crime is not so prevalent in the new area and that measures will be put in place to help to prevent it.

I would ask that the following issues be addressed carefully:

Clear demarcation of private and public areas with the use of physical barriers: The lack of ownership by the occupier's leads to a feeling that people can go where they like unchallenged. In particular, the rear of properties must be secured and there must be no legitimate reason for people to be there if not the occupier.

The use of security rated doors, windows and locks: Inferior communal doors are forced open and left ajar far too easily. Glazing has proved easily opened and locks have been snapped or forced with apparent ease.

Doors and windows must be to PAS24:2016 (or equivalent), and locks must be to TS007 3* or BS3621:2017. Laminated glass must be used in communal areas and not toughened.

Communal mail delivery systems (boxes) that are fit for purpose: Communal boxes made of very thin material have been 'pulled' open and the contents stolen. Fraudulent card applications can be made and mail intercepted with apparent ease. Mail boxes should be behind a secure door and be TS009 rated.

Careful design of rubbish storage: All too often bins overflowing with 'take-away' wrapping and food scraps are placed on the edge of roads, where they fall over and decant their contents causing issues. A proper storage area must be supplied, especially for individual 'wheelie-bins' where large euro-bins are not in use.

Vehicles parking: Cars are routinely parked on grass verges and pavements due to insufficient or inappropriate parking provision. Large rear court parking areas are no longer considered appropriate as users do not feel their cars will be safe there. They then park where they can see their car, which is normally to the front of the housing on the pavement or verge causing damage to the inappropriate surface.

Alleyways: There can be a tendency to 'over-supply' alleys and paths that do not actually lead anywhere constructive. Some paths appear to owe their existence to a desire to provide as many paths as possible in case someone may want to go somewhere. Direct paths that lead to shops or bus stops are likely to be well used and are 'policed' by users themselves. Less used paths can grant access to areas they shouldn't, and become crime drivers very quickly.

In an ideal world, these new homes would be purchased by single people, couples and families who wish to live in them and look after them as their own. In reality the likelihood is that most will be bought by absent landlords and rented out. This does have an effect on how the property, and in deed the area is used and sometimes abused and must be designed for. Homes should be built to reflect this occupancy. Play areas designed for young children soon become congregating areas for drinkers or others if they are not used regularly by young children.

We must learn the lessons from other such developments in the area. I am in a position to prove that housing built to the police preferred minimum security standard that is 'Secured by Design' (SBD), will suffer dramatically reduced levels of reported crime and anti-social behaviour.

This can be demonstrated locally and there is also a wealth of academic proof to support this statement. Building regulations do now incorporate an element of security but the standards required by Building Regulation 'Q' are already an out of date and have been replaced with superior performing products. It is surely incumbent on all to use these newer updated and proven products in order to fulfil the obligation to do all we can to reduce crime.

I would very much appreciate being involved in the evolving design process for these homes, as their impact will be dramatic on the local police force unless we take all reasonable measures to prevent this.

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